

Having described the invention, the following is claimed:

1. A method of fixing vertebrae of a patient together at a surgical site comprising the steps of:

inserting a first cannula into the body of the patient;

moving a first fastener through the cannula and securing the first fastener to a first vertebrae;

moving a second fastener through the cannula and securing the second fastener to a second vertebrae;

moving a first fixation element through the cannula; and

fixing the first fixation element to the first and second fasteners.

2. A method as defined in claim 1 further including the steps of:

inserting a second cannula into the body of the patient;

moving a third fastener through the second cannula and securing the third fastener to the first vertebrae;

moving a fourth fastener through the second cannula and securing the fourth fastener to the second vertebrae;

moving a second fixation element through the second cannula; and

fixing the second fixation element to the third and fourth fasteners.

3. A method as defined in claim 1 further including the step of expanding the first cannula at its end adjacent the first and second vertebrae.

4. A method as defined in claim 2 further including the steps of expanding the first cannula at its end adjacent the first and second vertebrae and expanding the second cannula at its end adjacent the first and second vertebrae.

5. A method as defined in claim 4 further including the step of shifting the first and second cannulae in the body to position the first and second cannulae to desired locations in the body.

6. A method as defined in claim 1 further including the step of positioning an endoscope in the first cannula to provide a view of the activity at the surgical site.

7. A method as defined in claim 6 further including the step of positioning an endoscope in the second cannula to provide a view of the activity at the surgical site.

8. A method as defined in claim 1 further comprising the step of cutting away tissue at the surgical site using two cutting tubes.

9. A method as defined in claim 8 further comprising the step of utilizing a blood coagulation sheath for receiving the two cutting tubes.

10. A method as defined in claim 1 wherein said step of securing the first fastener to the first vertebrae includes the step of screwing the first fastener into the first vertebrae and said step of securing the second fastener to the second vertebrae

includes the step of screwing the second fastener into the second vertebrae.

11. A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the first fixation element is a plate and the step of fixing the first fixation element to the first and second fasteners includes the step of positioning the plate with the first and second fasteners extending through openings in the plate and moving first and second nuts through the cannula and threading the nuts onto the first and second fasteners.

12. A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the first fixation element is a rod and the step of fixing the first fixation element to the first and second fasteners includes positioning the rod to extend adjacent said first and second fasteners and between said first and second vertebrae.

13. A method as defined in claim 7 wherein the first fixation element is a plate and the step of fixing the first fixation element to the first and second fasteners includes the step of positioning the plate with the first and second fasteners extending

through openings in the plate and moving first and second nuts through the cannula and threading the nuts onto the first and second fasteners.

14. A method as defined in claim 7 wherein the first fixation element is a rod and the step of fixing the first fixation element to the first and second fasteners includes positioning the rod to extend adjacent said first and second fasteners and between said first and second vertebrae.

15. A method as defined in claim 1 further including the steps of:

removing a disk from between the first and second vertebrae;

cleaning the area between the first and second vertebrae;

positioning at least one fusion cage between the first and second vertebrae by moving a fusion cage through the cannula; and

positioning bone graft tissue in and around the at least one fusion cage by moving bone graft tissue through the cannula.

16. A method as defined in claim 6 further including the steps of:

removing a disk from between the first and second vertebrae;

cleaning the area between the first and second vertebrae;

positioning at least one fusion cage between the first and second vertebrae by moving a fusion cage through the cannula; and

positioning bone graft tissue in and around the at least one fusion cage by moving bone graft tissue through the cannula.

17. A method as defined in claim 7 further including the steps of:

removing a disk from between the first and second vertebrae;

cleaning the area between the first and second vertebrae;

positioning at least one fusion cage between the first and second vertebrae by moving a fusion cage through the cannula; and

positioning bone graft tissue in and around
the at least one fusion cage by moving bone graft
tissue through the cannula.